ornaments, etc.), which up to the time of the Crusades formed the main objects of commerce, and yielded high profits, not to be gained in agriculture. Moreover, since the rise of the big landowners, the social position of the peasants was mostly that of villeins or serfs. The merchants of those days were, on the contrary, highly respected, and well received in the castles of princes, bishops, and nobles.

Thus the Jews entered Europe as strangers in religion, and strangers by the occupations in which they engaged; and these led them into the towns. This triple difference established and preserved the isolation of medieval Jewry. Could they at all have taken to agriculture, they could hardly have done so without scattering throughout the country and its numerous villages, which, in spite of the difference in religion, would probably in a few generations have resulted in complete assimilation. Engaged in commerce and concentrated in towns, they formed agglomerations and developed a social life of their own, moving and marrying within their own community.

It is possible that during the many centuries since the destruction of the Jewish State, and in the many countries where the Jews settled, there were some who turned to agriculture. It is known that Assyrian kings settled Israelites as colonists in their Empire, but they have completely disappeared; this probably is the origin of the

story about
the Ten Lost Tribes. In Northern Africa, in
pre-Islamic
times, great numbers of Jews were engaged in
agriculture,
but of these, too, the vast majority have been
absorbed by
the local population. Still,-no certain
information has come
down to us of those lost Jewries, whose
numbers may have
been very considerable—they have left no
history, and with
their national individuality their trail has
faded away.
Only those Jews count in history and in the
present who
have remained Jews, *i.e.* those who combined
their distinct
religion with differences in occupation, who
engaged in com-
merce and were settled in towns.